

American Review of EASTERN ORTHODOXY



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AROUND THE WORLD WITH THE CHURCH

FOREIGN

AN PATRIARCH PRAISES SOVIET. Patriarch Alexander III of Antioch, head of the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church, visited Bulgaria on his return trip from Moscow to Beirut, Lebanon. Accompanied by Archbishop Nifonte of Saba and Bishop Vasili of Samama, the trio were the guests in Sofia of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Now Radio quoted the Patriarch as saying: 'Soviet-Syrian friendship would help the Syrians in their independence against the imperialists'. In another statement he was reported as saying: 'It is a source of great happiness that Syria and other Eastern countries have such a friend as the Soviet Union.' It was further reported that Patriarch Alexander had undergone intensive medical treatment in Moscow, the cost of which was borne by the Soviet government.

In the absence of an official exarch for the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in the U.S.A., the Syrian Antiochian Archbishop Antony Bashir (Brooklyn, N.Y.) has been known to have officiated at ordinations and other events on behalf of the Communist Church, even to the receiving of official ecclesiastical awards from that body. - ED.

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MOSCOW PATRIARCH RECEIVES LENINGRAD MEDAL ON 80th BIRTHDAY. Patriarch Alexei of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, was awarded the Leningrad Medal by the Soviet government on his 80th birthday. He also received a birthday greeting from Prime Minister Nikolai A. Bulganin.

The medal, struck in connection with the 250th anniversary of Leningrad, was awarded the patriarch for the role he played during the siege of the city in the last war. He was then the Metropolitan of Leningrad.

On his birthday greeting, Marshall Bulganin told the patriarch that the Soviet government 'appreciates your patriotic activities'. He did not elaborate. The patriarch thanked the Marshall, replying: 'I will continue to work for the cause of peace with God's help'.

The patriarch's 'political activities' have shown fruit, considering both the news item on the Syrian Antiochian Church as well as the item following. - ED.

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GREEK CHURCH TO BE REPRESENTED AT MOSCOW CELEBRATIONS. The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece has decided to be represented at celebrations in Moscow in May marking the 40th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Russian Patriarchate.

However, Archbishop Theoclitos of Athens, head of the Greek Church, declined an invitation from the Patriarch Alexei to personally attend the celebrations as leader of three metropolitans. He explained his schedule was too heavy to permit his going. Metropolitans Panteleimon of Salonika, James of Attica and Ierotheos of Siatista will comprise the delegation.

The celebrations originally had been scheduled for Dec. 4th, 1957, but were postponed until May

10, 1958. The Moscow Patriarchate was dis-established in 1917, following the Bolshevik Revolution, but was re-established later the same year, following an agreement between the Soviet government and the Church providing for the separation of Church and State.

The Ecumenical Patriarch of Istanbul has also received invitations for himself and a delegation, but it is viewed unlikely that he will attend, due to the present tension between Turkey and the Soviet. The Turkish Press having been especially belligerent towards the Patriarch in the past years, they would likely capitalize on such an acceptance. However, the Patriarch of Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia are all expected to attend.

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BURIAL OF GREEK AUTHOR DENIED BY GREEK CHURCH. Archbishop Theoclitus of Athens denied permission for the body of Nikos Kazantzakis, well-known Greek author, to lie in state at the cathedral.

The archbishop cited, as his reason, that the writer had a strong anti-clerical tendency in his books.

Mr. Kazantzakis died at a hospital in Freiburg, Germany, at the age of 72. He was later buried in Herakleion, Crete, which was his birthplace. His works included 'Zorba the Greek' and 'Greek Passion'.

- Anyone familiar with similar 'sanctions' against famed historic writers can see the hand of narrow-minded clergy conspiring to thwart free expression of the individual. Makrakis and Tolstoi being two excellent examples of former days - both of which have since reacted against the clergy opinion and won wide-spread recognition and admiration from all parts of the world. - ED.

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SWEDISH CHURCH DELEGATION VISITS GREECE. A three man delegation from the Swedish Lutheran Church of Sweden, headed by Bishop John Cullberg of Vasteras, visited Athens as guests of the Greek Church. They were welcomed by Archbishop Theoclitus of Athens and other religious and civic leaders.

Main purpose of their trip was to participate in ceremonies opening the Manjavinatseion Hospital in Lixuri, Cephalonia. The hospital, damaged during the earthquakes of 1953, was reconstructed with the help of funds provided by the Swedish Church.

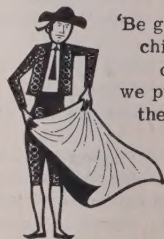
President of the medical center is Prof. Hamilcar Alivisatos, Greek Orthodox theologian.

- Prof. Alivisatos was formerly secretary of the Inter-church Aid and Foreign Relations Committee of the Greek Orthodox Church, but resigned (see AREO, June, 1957) in protest against a resolution of the Holy Synod which forbade clergymen to participate in meetings of the World Council of Churches. - ED.

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SPAIN CLOSES BAPTIST CHURCH. Second Baptist Church in Madrid came up against total resistance as police sealed doors and imprisoned Pastor Jose Nunez. In a continuing demonstration of 'police State' methods, the Spanish Foreign Ministry gave the U.S. Embassy the explanation that the church had been closed because it engaged in illegal proselytizing.

The congregation had previously run into difficulties in 1954, when their building was closed without explanation. Early last October, the congregation re-occupied the building when they found that the door seals had vanished. As they still possessed valid permit to



'Be good, lit children, or we put you the arena'

services, they made essential repairs and held three services before being closed for the night.

Arnold T. Ohrn, executive secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, explained that a national youth meeting held last August in the Baptist Church in Alicante was also broken up by riotous methods of the police. He added that, in spite of the persecution, a total of 2,630 British Baptists make up some 42 congregations and are growing more rapidly, percentage-wise, than any other Baptist group in the world. Last year saw 503 baptisms.

The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia, South America, reported a 'decrease in acts of violence or discrimination against Protestants' in the period from June to September. The Confederation embraces 14 Protestant groups in Colombia, most of them of U.S. origin. It added, however, that no Protestant churches or schools are allowed in the so-called 'Mission Territories' and, in addition, Protestants are barred everywhere from 'making public demonstrations of faith through radio broadcasts or public meetings'. - ED.

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THE HOUSE OF ENGLAND APPROVES GOV'T ON HOMOSEXUAL RECOMMENDATION. The House of Commons, by a vote of 155 to 138, approved in principle the government proposal to make homosexual conduct between consenting adults no longer a criminal offense.

Proposals were made by a government committee headed by Sir John Wolfenden, vice-chancellor of Reading University.

The assembly's approval came after a very stormy debate - especial support for the proposal, coming from Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, who told one and all that homosexuality violates manhood, it is unjust to make the homosexual a criminal.

'Do whatever you want to me, but you can't
change my stripes'

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THE HOUSE OF ENGLAND APPROVES GOV'T ON HOMOSEXUAL RECOMMENDATION.

Metropolitan Issahag Ghazarian, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Greece, was informed by the Foreign Section of the Athens Police Dept., that his residence permit will not be renewed. As a result, the metropolitan, who is an American citizen, will have to leave Greece as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Ghazarian arrived in Athens two months ago from Jerusalem, after being named primate of the Greek Church by Catholicos Vazken I, supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, whose headquarters are in Etchmiadzin, Soviet Armenia.

Difficulty in Greece apparently stemmed from opposition from a part of the membership, who protested to the Greek government against his appointment. They claimed he is under the influence of the Soviet.

Metropolitan Ghazarian was pastor of several Armenian congregations in the U.S. from 1946 to 1955. In 1955 he went to Etchmiadzin as secretary to Archbishop Mampre Calfayan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, to attend a council of Armenian leaders from various countries who elected Vazken I as Catholicos. Vazken, who previously had been Primate of the Armenians of Romania and Bulgaria, succeeded Georg VI, who died at Etchmiadzin in May, 1954. Following this council, Father Ghazarian later re-entered the monastery of the Armenian Brotherhood in Jerusalem, where he had been for a time prior to 1946, before coming to the U.S. Six months ago he was suddenly named Metropolitan and Patriarch of the Armenian Church in Greece.

ORTHODOX PRIESTS ASS'N OF SERBIA MARKS 15th ANNIVERSARY. With Serbian orthodox Patriarch Vikentije taking part, for the first time, in a public ceremony sponsored by government-allied Orthodox Priests Association, evidence was seen that finally the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church was taking a more favorable attitude towards the priests' organization.

Until now, the Holy Synod has claimed the association to be 'Communist-inspired'.

Last June, Yugopress, semi-official news agency, claimed that 81% of the Serbian Orthodox clergy were members of the association.

- Yugopress also claimed 40% of the approximately 3,000 Roman Catholic priests in the nation to be in affiliation with the similar government-backed association for Catholic clergy. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, of course, refuses to recognize the association. Representatives of the Catholic priests' association reportedly were present at the anniversary ceremony. - ED.

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TESTIFIES IN GOD'S NAME; -DIES.

Way down in Kingston, Jamaica, a fifty-four year old man was being tried for a counterfeiting charge.

Proclaiming: 'God would strike me down dead, if I am not telling the truth', Mannasah Thomas was, nevertheless, found guilty. Having been convicted, he collapsed and died.

Justice? Circumstance?

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BIRTH CONTROL DRIVE PLANNED IN POLAND. Plans for a network of birth control clinics over the country, along with a nationwide lecture program on the use of contraceptives were announced at a National Conference on Planned Motherhood, meeting in Warsaw.

Officials stated the campaign was designed to counteract the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

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RUSSIAN CLERGY TOURING INDIA. A delegation of Russian churchmen left Russia for the World Conference of Religions in New Delhi. The delegates included Archpriest Konstantin Ruzhitsky, rector of the Russian Orthodox academy in Zagorsk, and Mufti Ziauddin Babakhan, a leader of the Moslem community.

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JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE TO RECEIVE MOSCOW DELEGATION. A delegation from the Moscow Patriarchate is expected to visit Jerusalem during this month. Purpose? To offer financial aid to the beleaguered Greek Orthodox Patriarchate there.

It was believed that the visit is the result of a report submitted to Patriarch Alexei of Moscow by the Bishop of Paskov, Russia. The bishop recently returned from the Middle East where he attempted to strengthen ties between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Churches there.

Altho the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, Egypt, receives regular financial aid from the Moscow Patriarchate, it is thought that Patriarch Benediktos of Jerusalem will reject such an offer. He has been quoted as saying that relations between his patriarchate and the Russian Church would not go beyond 'well-understood good neighborliness'.

NEW HEAD OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX MISSION IN ISRAEL INSTALLED. Archimandrite Podim was installed as new head of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Israel at a service in Unity Cathedral, Jerusalem. He replaces Archimandrite Pimen, who was recalled to Moscow at March.

A group of Greek Orthodox Arab priests, as well as Russian clergy, were present at the service. Three Russian Orthodox archimandrites from Jordan were not permitted by that government to cross into Israel for the rites.

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EARTH TOMB OF EARLY CHRISTIAN BISHOP NEAR BUDAPEST. A 4th Century tomb of a Christian bishop of the early Constantine era was unearthed in the small town of Tuzsoly, 60 miles northwest of Budapest.

The tomb and several others were discovered when a site was being excavated for a new oil refinery. They were examined by a group of archeologists, including Dr. Polycarp Rado, a professor of the Roman Catholic theological academy in Budapest.

The experts reported finding a silver-mounted crozier and various liturgical vessels of bronze and glass in the bishop's grave. They said that previously only two early bishops' tombs had been found in Europe - one in Ravenna and the other in the south of France.

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STRUGGLE BETWEEN 'CROSS AND CRESCENT' FORECAST. Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, Rev. John McGee, recently revealed that Islam and other religions of the East are experiencing a resurgence under the guise of nationalism and that Christianity is going to be difficult going in the future, in Africa.

Addressing the Louisiana Baptist Brotherhood, he outlined the techniques of the Moslem approach: - \$50,000,000 is being raised in the Arab world to make Africa Moslem; A Cairo University is stressing that Islam is the religion best suited for African peoples because it 'least interferes' with local native customs. The missionary clarified further, 'They really make no demands on their people. They require allegiance and that is all. The people continue their old practices'.

He said that altho there are some 600 Southern Baptist churches in Nigeria, with 50,000 membership and 190 missionaries and 380 native ministers, and altho 500 day schools operate with 8,000 student enrollment, under the guidance of 3,000 native teachers, that the Moslem influence is so strong that Christian missionaries are forbidden by the British-governed Nigerian authorities to preach in certain areas, especially in the north. He added that there are about 5,000,000 Moslems in Nigeria.



'They all taste alike to me'

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SLOVAK LUTHERAN BISHOPS VISIT YUGOSLAVIA. Three bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Augsburg Confession) in Slovakia conferred in Belgrade with Patriarch Vasilije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as with State Commission for Religious Affairs officials.

They were Bishop Jan Chabada, head of the Church, and Bishops Julius Krczmeri and Andrey Bratka. It was the first visit of Slovak bishops to Yugoslavia since the war. Their purpose was to make a tour of Lutheran churches throuout the country.

YUGOSLAVIA LIFTS BAN ON JOURNAL OF MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE. Following the visit of Patriarch Alexei (Moscow) and his 12 man delegation to Belgrade, a few weeks back, the Yugoslav government withdrew its five year ban against the Journal, which is the official organ of the Russian Orthodox Church.

A decree, signed by Svetislav Stefanovic, secretary of the Interior Ministry, said the action against the publication, taken in 1952, was formally removed and set aside.

The ban had been imposed after some of the Russian Church leaders, particularly Metropolitan Nicolai of Krutitzky, had strongly attacked President Tito during the Cominform dispute between Yugoslavia and the Soviet, which had lasted from 1948 to 1955.

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ISRAEL WILL NOT BAR MISSIONARIES. Dr. Chaim Vardi, counsellor on Christian affairs in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, said there are about 400 Christian missionaries in Israel of whom some 200 are engaged in evangelism and the balance in medical and social work. He said the government will not restrict the admittance or work of Christian missionaries.

He amplified by detailing the Christian population in Israel as at about 45,000: 24,000 Roman Catholics - 15,000 Greek Orthodox - 1,500 Protestants - 1,000 Copts - 2,500 Armenian, Syrian and Russian Orthodox - 1,000 Arab Episcopalians affiliated with the Church of England. The rest of Israel's population being made up of some 2,000,000 Jews and 150,000 Moslems.

Dr. Vardi said that altho missionaries have won some converts among the Jews, 'there seem to be more missionaries than converts.' Continuing, he added: 'Many persons have protested that the number of Christian missionaries seems unusually high in comparison with the number of Christians; but, we have been grateful for the educational and medical work they have done and we believe it to be in the interest of religious freedom to admit them.'

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ARCHBISHOP APPEALS FOR BUTCHER'S LICENSE. Roman Catholic (Melkite) Archbishop George Hakim of Haifa appealed to Mayor Gershon Agron of Jerusalem to grant a non-kosher butcher's license to an Arab Christian, Suleiman Balan. The Archbishop said minority groups are deliberately excluded from many jobs and deserve the right of being protected.

In another action, a Jaffa butcher, Michel Menasse, argued before the Supreme Court in Jerusalem that a Tel-Aviv law prohibits the sale of pork, and that this is unconstitutional because it is a prejudice and discrimination against Christians. Tel-Aviv mayor, Chaim Levanon, said no discrimination was intended against the 'eating of pork', only against the sale. He also pointed out that the butcher's shop was located in a Jewish section. Supporting Menasse were the heads of the Jaffa Roman Catholic community, who entered a sworn statement that discrimination was intended. The question hinged on the point: 'How can you eat pork, when you aren't allowed to buy it?' The Court scheduled further hearings at a later date.

● Jaffa is part of the Tel-Aviv municipality. - ED.

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GREEK CHURCH URGED TO MAKE POLICY ON RELATIONS WITH WORLD COUNCIL. The Athens newspaper, Kathimerini, urged the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece to come to an early decision on the extent to which it will participate in the World Council of Churches.

Kathimerini, organ of the National Progressive Union (Party) of the Center, said the decision to be taken 'is of historic significance for both the Orthodox Church and the ecumenical movement'. Adding 'It is necessary that this problem be wisely studied', the paper said, 'bearing in mind the need for cooperation among all Christian churches so that the social, ethical and even political problems of the present age be confronted.'

Kathimerini said the active participation of the Church in Greece, 'the biggest free Orthodox

rch,' will 'surely increase the prestige and influence of the World Council'. It stressed
at those 'pleading dogmatic differences between the Eastern Orthodox Church and others
onging to the World Council' should keep in mind that the World Council 'neither is, nor
eks to become, a 'super-Church'.

World Council', the daily said, 'is but a movement deriving its power from the partici-
at Churches'.

paper praised the 'sincere and unreserved manner' in which the Ecumenical Patriarchate
stanbul has cooperated with the World Council. 'The Ecumenical Patriarchate, finding it-
of buffeted by various tides, prefers to follow a steady and wise course, convinced that it
have the support of all the patriarchates and the autocephalous Orthodox Churches'.

rged all the Orthodox Churches to 'put aside their divergent views regarding cooperation
h the World Council' and come to an agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the
stion.

Reasonable and judicial cooperation among all Christian bodies aids in discovering if
they are Christian in act, as well as in professed teachings and belief. - ED.

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DOMESTIC



ENHOWER NAMES ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST TO CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION -
CLUDES PROTESTANT OR JEWISH CLERGY. President Eisenhower named the Rev.
her Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame, as one of
six-man Civil Rights Commission.

ile the five other members named are all Protestants, not one Jewish leader, rabbi, or
testant or other non-Catholic clergy were included. The purpose of the Commission is
investigate charges that citizens are being denied the vote for reasons of : 'color, race,
igion or national origin' It will also 'collect information concerning legal developments
stituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution'.

nomination appointments will have to be confirmed by the Senate when it reconvenes.

President recently said he wanted a 'non-partisan' group, persons of national reputa-
n, representing the 'spectrum of American opinion' on civil rights, and with a 'judicial
n of mind'.

law, no more than three of the commissioners can come from one political party.

the six appointed, four are lawyers - one of the four being a Negro. The priest and one
er are listed among 'educators', not lawyers; altho the president said they should have
udicial turn of mind'.

Apparently the first job the Commission should do, if the appointees are approved by
Senate, is to investigate the method of their being chosen - it certainly is not any
vidence of being in keeping with the purpose the Commission is expected to fulfill.
Violation of its purpose, negates its results before they can even be accomplished.
In keeping with tradition, the State should keep the Church out of its affairs, and visa
versa. - ED.

INTER-CHURCH CENTER UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN NEW YORK CITY. \$19,700,000 will be the cost of erecting the 18 story, block-square building, which will house the central offices of the National Council of Churches(4 floors); agencies of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.(3 floors); Methodist Board of Missions-its Overseas Relief-and Information Center(3 floors); American Baptist Convention(2 floors); Reformed Church in America(1 floor); divided floor space will be shared in the building by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, World Council of Churches, International Missionary Council, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, and the Hymn Society of America. Numerous other agencies, both medical and missionary, associations, councils, conventions, etc. will also occupy space. Three uncommitted floors are being reserved for other interested Christian denominations

A manuscript room adjacent to the main entrance has been specially designed for the display of words and music of hymns. A collection of Iconography and Eastern Orthodox religious art will be shown in a space next to the chapel's narthex.

The Center will be completely air-conditioned. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. donated the land and \$2,000,000 of the cost of the structure.

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TV PRODUCTION SEQUEL TO FAMED 'MONGANGA'. Televiewers, who, last year, saw the superb TV film of 'Monganga' on the March of Medicine, will be pleased to know that on January 23, 1958, 10 P.M.(E.T.) another filmed production, entitled 'M.D. International', will be shown. Produced by the Smith, Kline and French Laboratories, this new production presents a far wider coverage, both medical and geographical, of the march of medicine in our times.

'Monganga', of course, portrayed the work of a Disciples of Christ missionary in Africa. The missionary, a medical man, was shown in his daily battle with the leprosy scourge.

'M.D. International' details work being done by medical missionaries of varied religious groups in lands from Korea to Hong Kong, Sawawak, Nepal, the Near East, Ethiopia and other similar primitive lands. Beautifully scripted in poetic prose, it brings the need of Man and Man's medical response to it.

- Something that should not be missed by any viewer of TV - ED.

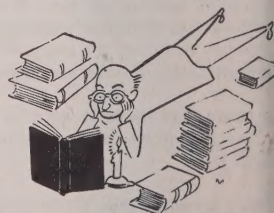
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BISHOP EZEKIEL TO HEAD EPIPHANY CELEBRATION AT TARPON SPRINGS. The 54th annual Epiphany ceremonies to be held January 6th at Tarpon Springs, Florida is a nationally famous observance of the Baptism of Christ. Heading the elaborate festival will be the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Chicago, Ezekiel.

Born in Patras, Greece, in 1913, the 44 year-old clergyman is a graduate of the Theological School of the University of Athens. Ordained as a priest on November 30, 1935, in Athens, he served as chancellor of the Diocese of Karditsa. Coming to the U.S. in 1937, he was naturalized a citizen in 1945. During this period, he not only served pastorates, but also received his Master of Sacred Theology degree from Hartford Seminary. In 1949 he became dean of the Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, Mass. and was, thereafter, consecrated a Bishop on Sept. 17, 1950. Following the death of Bishop Gerasimos, he was transferred, March 1954, to Chicago, where he heads a diocese that includes the midwest, Texas and sections of Canada.

Serving as chief-celebrant at Tarpon Springs, he continues the long line of illustrious hierarchs who have gone before him - among them, the present Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras.

The Epiphany Celebration, known also as the Cross Day Celebration, is numbered among the oldest of observances, ecclesiastically, of the primitive Church. Originally, of course, it was observed as Christmas. The date of Dec. 25th being adopted much later in the history of the Church. The early Church taught that Jesus was actually born Christ at his baptism, as it was in the river Jordan that the Spirit came upon him and the words: 'Behold, Mine only-begotten Son' were made manifest. (Manifestation, of course, being a type of birth)

In keeping with this thought, an article has been adapted for AREO, by the Editor, which gives an insight into both the tradition of Christmas vs. Epiphany, as well as the origin of the 'Star of the Wise-men' and its meaning. - ED.

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EASTERN ORTHODOX - EPISCOPAL CHURCH 'UNITY' SERVICES SCHEDULED. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25, will see cooperation between the 'high church' Episcopal Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches. This was announced by the ACU, American Church Union, which is an Episcopal group.

The week, observed annually, was designated by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. Roman Catholics, thruout the world, also pray for religious unity during this same period - their observance is known as the Chair of Unity Octave.

John Albert J. duBois of New York, the ACU's executive director, said two of the outstanding Anglo-Orthodox services would be held at St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles on Jan. 17th and at the pro-Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection of the Russian Orthodox Church of North America, N.Y.C. on Jan. 20th. The ACU official said that Episcopalians had initiated the annual unity observance after the turn of the century. He expressed happiness at the idea was gaining momentum and approval among all Christians.

Prayer for 'unity' is not new to the Church - the 1st Ecumenical Council, convened in Nicaea in 325 A.D., had, as its motive, the setting forth of the Faith of the Fathers, along with means of preserving it - prayer being one of the chief means of this being done. The cooperation of the Orthodox hierarchs, of today, with both the World Council and National Council of Churches, is concrete evidence of their willing spirit to see a growth of unity among such of the Christian cooperating bodies as are likewise willing to see the same end achieved. For this act they have often been accused of being 'Protestant' or 'pro-Protestant' and even, by some, of being 'anti-Catholic'. Such, however, is not the case. The Orthodox hierarchs are interested in one thing: evidencing the spirit of the Faith, as handed down from the Fathers of the Church. To do this, isolation can not be practiced. In fact, a spirit of willing cooperation must be manifest; an ability to reason, discuss and, above all, to practice the Spirit of Christianity. - ED.

PROGRESS AT ST. TIKHON'S ORTHODOX SEMINARY. A new Seminary Press, complete linotype and presses to print in English, Russian and Church Slavonic, under the management of Nicholas Stream, was recently dedicated. The purpose of the press is to make available more material on the Orthodox Church, independent of non-Orthodox sources.

St. Tikhon's Seminary is located at South Canaan, Penna. It was also the scene, last month, of the entry into Monastic life of the second American-born Russian in more than 150 years of the life of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America. The new monk is Michael Bobich (Hierodeacon Seraphim), a 1957 graduate from the Seminary. Archbishop Dimitry of Philadelphia officiated. The purpose of accepting the new monk is to endeavor to bring about a revitalization of American monasticism, which has been in a state of passivity for generations.

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UNVEIL FIRST GREEK ORTHODOX MURALS BY GREEK-AMERICAN ARTIST. A group of murals, described as 'the first complete iconography painted by an American-born artist in the pure Byzantine form', were unveiled at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Flushing N.Y.

They were executed by Demetrios Dukas, iconographer and lecturer on Byzantine sacred art at the Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, Mass.

Depicted are St. Nicholas, Mary and Child, Christ, and S. John Baptist in their traditional places on the Iconostasis. Behind the Holy Table is a rendering of the Crucifixion and in the half-dome above is a large mural of Christ as Sovereign of the Universe. To either side of this large mural are murals of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

In painting the murals, Mr. Dukas used the traditional egg tempera technique employed by Byzantine artists from the 5th to 15th centuries, when this art form flourished.

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FOUR-BODY LUTHERAN MERGER ADVANCES. The proposed merger of the 2,335,000 member United Lutheran Church in America; the 557,000 Augustana Lutheran Church; the 36,000 member Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church; and the 22,000 member American Evangelical Lutheran Church - advanced in its preliminary stages.

A Joint Commission has proposed the name of the new church body to be: 'The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America'. In addition, they approved a doctrinal statement to be written into its constitution and projected a new organizational structure.

The Joint Commission expressed its feeling that nomenclature in the new organization might well follow the American tradition, rather than the European - altho, the use of 'ancient and historic titles for function and leadership in the Church' would 'most effectively communicate the nature of such functions and leadership to the world at large'. In keeping with this, the term 'Synod' was chosen to become the word denoting constituent units.

In line with security for clergy, an annual disability pension of \$1200 for ministers under 65 and a minimum annual pension, for those who retire subsequent to June 30, 1956, of \$900, found approval.

● The gradual 'seeking-out' of the Protestant and Catholic Churches of the 'ancient and historic' can well bring about, in the future, a better meeting ground in which Orthodoxy can aid in establishing the 'Faith of the Fathers, once given...' - ED.

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CHURCH USES COUGH-DROPS. Grace Presbyterian Church, Mpls. Minn., adopted, several years ago, a method of making cough-drops available to coughing worshippers.

Morris C. Robinson, pastor, explained '...nobody wanted to get up from the middle of a church and go seeking an usher in the midst of an anthem or a sermon. In order, therefore, to make the cough-drops easily available, we scotch-taped some packages to our center pew support and at each end of the pew so that a person could have easy access' to them.

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OFFERS \$500,000 TOWARDS A PROPOSED BAPTIST HOSPITAL. A Jewish resident of Lafayette, La., has offered the Louisiana Baptist Convention \$100,000 in cash and a prime building site, worth \$400,000, towards the construction of a proposed hospital there.

The Convention's executive board, meeting in Baton Rouge, voted to name a special committee to study the means of building a \$2,500,000 hospital in Lafayette, accordingly.

An evidence of the constant spirit of Charity and cooperation that is fundamental to the nature of Jewish people. - ED.

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MARTIN VS. GOD

Isolated in a city of Russia, there lived a shoemaker, Martin by name. His shop was in a tiny basement room, only one window giving him a glimpse of the feet of passerbyes. His long acquaintance with the local inhabitants enabled him to recognize them by their boots, he having repaired most of them at least once.

Martin was known as a man of his word by one and all and, altho old in years, his work was such that all could bear witness to its quality. Thus, he had plenty to do and managed to make a sparse living.

Living alone had not always been his lot. He had been married and his several children, with the exception of one, had all died in infancy. His wife, too, had died and left him with a three year old son. This son was his joy and hope, but fate frowned upon him and even as the boy reached an age, where he might be of some help to his father, he was stricken with fever and died. Martin murmured against God and prayed earnestly for death for himself as well. In his suffering, he abandoned the church and lived as a hermit in his little shop.

An old friend, whom he had not seen for years, arrived from Martin's native village, on his way to a pilgrimage at a nearby monastery. Seeing the suffering of Martin, he inquired as to the cause. Martin poured out his heart, telling him of his grievances and expressing his desire for death to end his hopelessness.

The old man answered him: 'Martin, my friend, we have no right to think and speak thusly. None of us know God's ways and only His Will must decide our fates. God must have willed that you should live, even though your son is dead. Perhaps the reason you despair so is due to the fact that you live only for your own personal happiness and pleasure'.

Asked Martin: 'And what else should a man live for?'

'Martin, one must live for God', his friend answered. 'From Him comes our life. When one has learned to live for Him, grief departs, and all seems peaceful and beautiful'.

Being silent for awhile, thinking, Martin raised his head and asked: 'But, how then is one to live for God?'

The old friend responded: 'How one may live for God is shown to us by Christ. You can read, Martin, can't you? Then go and buy the Gospels and study them; in them you will find how God wants you to live. It is all there waiting for you.'

Deeply these words sank into Martin's heart and, after his friend had departed, he hurried to a shop to buy himself a copy of the New Testament, printed in fine, large type.

His intention was, at first, to only read on holidays, but soon he found himself so engrossed and fascinated with the Book, that he read every day. It made his heart feel light and free, so free that often, at night, his oil lamp would burn out before he knew it. The more he read, the more he began to understand what God wished from him - he began to realize how he might live for God. In olden days, he had been wont to brood, with heavy heart, over his lost son; but now he found himself saying in constant murmur: 'Glory to Thee, glory to Thee, O Lord. Thy Will be done'.

Gradually Martin found his life began to change. Holidays, for instance, always meant relaxation in a public-house over tea and perhaps a glass or two of vodka. Often he left the public-

*An abridged and adapted rendition of the famous Tolstoi folk-story: 'Where Love is, God is

use, not actually drunk, but in such a merry mood that he would utter foolish things; shout-
ing and abusing strangers. This type of life now left him and he became peaceful and joyful.
The mornings he would sit down to his day's work; in the evenings, when he had finished his
work, he would light his lamp, put it upon the table, take his book from the shelf, open it and
start his reading. He found that the more he read, the better he began to understand and the
clearer and happier his mind became.

One night as he sat reading, completely absorbed in his book, it happened to be the Gospel of
Luke, sixth chapter, he came upon the saying:

'To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh
away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee;
and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men
should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.'

Reading further, he saw:

'And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh
to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:
He is like a man, which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a
rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could
not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like
a man, that without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream
did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.'

On this, Martin's heart was filled and his soul became filled also with great gladness. Tak-
ing off his glasses, he laid them on the Bible; resting upon his arms, he meditated upon his
past life, asking himself:

'Is my house built on rock, or sand? If it be truly on rock, well and good. To justify my-
self, while I am here alone, is easy, for one is prone to think he has done all God has
commanded; and as long as one watches his actions and remains on guard, he does well;
but, as soon as I cease so doing, I sin again. But, I will persevere for it brings me joy.
In this, then, O God, help me.'

When as he needed his rest, Martin felt loth to leave his reading, so he continued. He read
on into the 7th chapter - about the faith of the centurion, the son of the widow of Nain, his
teaching of John's disciples - and lastly he came to the verses dealing with the Pharisee, who
wanted Christ to eat in his house; he read on about the woman, who was known as a sinner,
and how she anointed Jesus' feet, washing them with her tears and wiping them with the hair
of her head. Verse 44 confronted Martin:

'And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered
into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with
tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this wom-
an since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst
not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.'

Martin read these verses and thought: 'He gave no water for his feet, his head with oil did
not anoint....' Martin once more took off his glasses and laid them on the Book. He pon-
dered -

'That Pharisee, he must have been like me. He must have thought only of himself - per-
haps only how to get his tea, or to keep warm and comfortable. Why, he probably never
really cared about his guest at all. And, imagine, who was his guest? Why, the Lord
Himself. I wonder, if He visited me, would I do the same?'

Martin lowered his head. He was very tired and sleepy. He drowsed.

'Martin', said a voice, in a soft whisper.

Starting from his sleep, Martin gasped: 'Who is there'?

Looking to the right and the left, Martin turned to the door. Nowhere could he find a soul. He called again and again. Then, quite clearly, he heard:

'Martin, Martin. Watch for me tomorrow, for I will come'.

Thoroughly roused, Martin stood up and wondered whether he had rightly. Fancying it to be a dream or hallucination, Martin went to bed in a confused state of mind.

Early in the morn, even before daybreak, he was up and about. Saying his prayers, he prepared his breakfast by lighting the fire and warming his soup and porridge. He then lit the samovar, put on his apron and sat down by the window to commence his day's work. His mind could not help but turning back constantly to his dream, or, at least, he thought it to be one. He reasoned: 'Things like this must have happened before'.

As he occasionally glanced into the street, while working, he watched for unfamiliar boots that might betray a new and unfamiliar person in the neighborhood. When he saw such boots he would bend far forward to peer upwards to see the face, as well. A house-porter passed by with new felt boots; then came a water-carrier. Soon came an old soldier-of-the-line, one of the men of Nicholas' reign. He had a spade in his hand and with it he began to clear away the snow before Martin's window. Martin knew him well, especially by his boots, for they were old shabby felt ones. The soldier's name was Stepanich and he resided with a nearby tradesman, who kept him, out of charity; as such, he helped the porter. Martin gave him but a quick glance and went back to his work and to his musing:

'I must be getting in my dotage', he thought with a laugh. 'Imagine, Stepanich comes to clear away snow and I must needs think it is Christ who has come to visit my house. What a fool am I'.

A dozen more stitches at his work and Martin glanced up again. Old Stepanich was apparently fatigued or cold, for he had leaned his spade against the building and was in seeming distress. Probably he did not even have the strength to shovel snow. Martin felt he should call him in and give him some tea, for the samovar had just begun to give forth its boil. Sticking hisawl in the table, Martin carried the samovar to the table and brewed the tea. Going to the window, he tapped insistently with his fingers. Stepanich leaned down to look in at Martin's beckoning hand. He turned away to go to the door.

Opening the door, Martin said: 'Come in and get warm. You must be half-frozen'.

'Truly, my friend, I am aching all over. May God Bless you for your kindness', said the old soldier. As he entered, he stopped to shake off the snow and wipe his feet so as to not track the floor; his effort caused him to totter and nearly collapse.

Hastily Martin said: 'Please, do not trouble yourself so;- foot-marks are all a part of the days work. I do not mind. Just come in and be seated and have some tea'.

Quickly filling two tumblers, he gave his visitor one, and pouring his own into a saucer, he blew upon it to cool it somewhat.

Stepanich quaffed his glass with relish and, turning it upside down to indicate he had enough, he began to express his gratitude. His manner showed he desired more, however, and Martin as a good host should, pressed another glassful upon him. As they drank, Martin kept up his watch on the street.

'Are you expecting someone'?, asked his visitor.

'That is a question which causes me shame. I'm not really expecting anyone; but, last night I heard something, which I just can't get out of my mind. I don't know if it was fact or fancy. All I know, my friend, is that I sat here reading the Gospel, all about Christ and what he did

arth. You probably know all about it?

ll, I am an ignorant man', said Stepanich, 'and I can't read, but I have heard tell of it.'

me tell you, then. You see, I was reading of how he walked on earth and I came to that that tells about the Pharisee who didn't receive him too well. As I read, I could not help think that this fellow had not done Christ the Lord a proper honor. I supposed maybe that could also happen to me, and, if it did, what length I would not go to, to receive him. As I considering this, I fell into a heavy doze, when, suddenly, I heard my name called. Now, I know that no one was here, yet I heard: 'Expect me, I will come tomorrow'. This thing happened twice. I can't get it out of my mind and I am ashamed of myself. Imagine, I keep expecting the arrival, momentarily, of our Lord.'

anich shook his head in silence. Again he had finished his glass and had turned it upside down; Martin saw this and again he quickly refilled it, saying:

re, drink another glass, and may God bless you. You know, I was thinking about Christ how he walked around, just like us. He didn't despise common people, such as we; in fact, he chose his apostles from the likes of us - workmen, that is all we are, sinners, too. Christ said: 'He who raises himself, shall be abased; and he who humbles himself, shall be exalted up'. 'You call me Lord', he also said, 'and I must needs wash your feet'. 'He who would be first, let him become servant of all; because, blessed are the poor, the humble, the meek and the merciful.'

anich had forgotten his tea; tears poured down his cheeks. He pushed back his glass and crossed himself and said: 'Martin, thank you, for you have given me both food and comfort for soul and body'.

are indeed welcome and I wish you would come again', said Martin 'and please know it was a pleasure to have had you as a guest.'

Er Stepanich had left, Martin finished the tea from the samovar and went back to his bench. He worked on the back seam of a boot and, as he stitched, he kept constant vigil out the window, waiting for Christ and thinking about all he had ever read of him. His head was filled with thoughts of Christ's words.

Two soldiers passed by: one clad in government issue boots, the other in boots of his own; the first came a landlord, in shining galoshes; then a baker loaded with a heavy basket. All went on their ways. A woman, with worsted stockings and peasant shoes passed slowly by, but she did not stop by the wall. Martin, glancing upwards, saw she was a stranger and poorly dressed. In addition, she had a baby in her arms, which she was trying to wrap against the cold bite of the wind. To protect the infant, she stood with her back to the wind and her clothes were of summer weight and very shabby and worn. Thru the window, Martin could hear the whine of the baby and the woman soothing voice, as she endeavored to comfort it. Martin rose, went to the door and up the steps and called:

'A dear lady, I say, my dear.'

The woman heard his call and turned around.

'Why do you stand there with the baby in this cold. Pray, come in. It is warm in here and I will be able to wrap him better. Just step this way.'

The woman hesitated at the sight of this old man, with spectacles on his nose and apron about his waist, but she followed as he went in. Down the steps they went, and into the little room. The old man beckoned her towards the bed.

'Come here, my child, close to the stove. Warm yourself and feed the baby.'

'I wish I could feed him, but I have no milk; and I haven't eaten since early this morning; but I thank you'. Nevertheless, the woman took the babe to her breast.

Martin shook his head. Stooping down, he took out a bowl and some bread. Opening the door of the oven, he took out the cabbage soup and poured some into the bowl. As the porridge was not quite ready, he spread a cloth on the table and set the bowl of soup and the bread on it.

'Come and sit, my dear, and while you eat I will mind the baby. Bless me, I've had children of my own and I quite know how to take care of them'.

The woman rose, crossed herself and sat down to the table. As she hungrily ate, Martin laid the baby on the bed and sat beside it. He chuckled it and chuckled it, but as the infant had no teeth, he could not do it well and the infant continued its ceaseless crying. Poking at it with his finger, Martin stuck his finger straight at the baby's mouth and, without hurting or touching the tender lips, he again quickly withdrew his finger. This he did over and over again. He didn't want the baby to take the finger in its mouth, for the finger was black with cobbler's wax. But the baby became enraptured with the finger and watched its every move. Soon it began to laugh. Martin felt pleased.

As the woman sat eating, she began to talk, as well, and told who she was and where she had been.

'I'm a soldier's wife', she said, 'and they sent my husband far away, I know not where. For eight long months I have heard nothing from him. Until the baby was born, I was able to be a cook, but afterward they discharged me. That was three months ago. Since then I have been struggling just to find a place to work. I have sold all I own, just to eat. I even hired out as a wet-nurse, but everyone refused me as being too thin and starved-looking. Just the other day a friend from our village, who is a domestic at a tradesman's house, was able to get me placed there; but the wife of the household told me I would have to wait till next week. In the meantime, what can I do. I am worn out and the poor baby is starving. If it weren't for the kindness of the landlady, where we stay, I would be lost. She is giving us lodging free.'

Martin heaved a sigh. 'Do you not have any warmer clothing?' he asked.

'Warmer clothing? Why, I have pawned or sold everything I have and sold my last shawl for sixpence yesterday', said she.

The woman arose and came and took the child and Martin got up. He went and rummaged among some of his things and pulled out an old cloak.

'Here', he said, 'even though it's a worn-out old thing, it will do to keep the infant warm.'

The woman looked at the cloak and burst into tears. Martin gave her the cloak and turned away in embarrassment. He got down on his knees and groped under the bed, pulling out a small trunk. Fumbling in it, he finally arose again and sat down in the chair, facing the woman. The woman looked at him and said:

'May God bless you, friend. Surely Christ must have sent me to your window, else the child would have frozen. When I went out this morn, it was mild, but now it is bitter cold. Surely it must have been Christ who made you look out of your window and take pity on me'.

Martin smiled and said: 'Yes, it is quite true; Christ did make me do it. It was not a mere chance that I looked out'.

He told the woman his dream and how he had heard the voice of the Lord promising to come to visit him that day.

'Who knows? All things are possible,' said the woman. She threw the cloak over her shoulders, wrapping it around herself and the baby. Then she bowed and thanked Martin once more.

'Take this for Christ's sake,' said Martin, and he pressed a sixpence on her, that she might get a shawl. He then let her out to go on her way.

With the woman gone, Martin ate some of the cabbage soup, cleared the things away and sat down to his work-table once more. As he continued working, he again took up his vigil of the window, and every time a shadow crossed it, he would look up to see who it was. In this fashion much time passed, without Martin seeing anyone remarkable or unusual.

After awhile, an apple-woman stopped directly in front of the window. She was carrying a big basket, but apparently there were not many apples left in it, most of them, undoubtedly, already had been sold. On her back was a sack full of wood chips that she was taking home. Martin surmised she must have picked them up around some construction job. From the way she shifted about, the sack evidently hurt her. Suddenly she set the basket down and took off the sack and started to shake the chips down by bouncing the sack up and down on the ground. As she was engaged in this task, a boy in a tattered cap ran up and quickly snatched an apple from the basket and tried to slip away; but, the old woman was quick as an eel and caught him by his sleeve. He struggled to free himself, setting up a great clamor the meanwhile. The old woman held on with both hands and knocked his cap from his head and grabbed hold of his hair. Martin dropped his awl, not even waiting to stick it in its place, and rushed out of the door. Stumbling up the stairs, he dropped his eyeglasses but continued on into the street. The old woman was continuing to jerk the boy's hair, scolding and threatening to take him to the police. The lad was struggling and protesting, saying: 'I did not take it. Why do you beat me? Let me go.'

Martin forced them apart and took the boy by the hand, saying: 'Let him go, Nanny. Forgive him for Christ's sake'.

The old woman relinquished her grasp. The boy tried to slip away, but Martin took hold of him, in turn.

'Now, lad, ask Nanny's forgiveness; and don't ever do this again, for I saw you, with my own eyes, take that apple.'

The lad sobbingly begged the woman for forgiveness.

Martin said: 'That's right, lad, and now here is an apple for you'. With this saying, Martin took an apple from the basket and gave it to the boy. Turning towards the old woman, Martin said: 'Don't be alarmed, Nanny, I will pay you for it'.

'You, you will spoil them by doing things that way; why, those young whippersnappers should be whipped so that they can remember nothing else. You will ruin them with such methods', responded Nanny.

'Oh, no, no, what you say is our way, the way of the world, Nanny, but, it is not God's way. This boy should be whipped for what he has done, what would you suggest be done to each of us for our many sins'?

The old woman held her tongue and was silent with chagrin.

Then Martin explained to her of the parable of the Lord who forgave his servant a very large debt, and how the servant went out and seized one who owed him, in turn, by the throat. While Martin told the story, the boy stood, with open mouth, and listened to it all.

'God forgives us all, our many acts,' said Martin, 'else we should never be forgiven. We, too, must forgive every one, and a thoughtless youngster most of all.'

Wiggling her head, the old woman sighed: 'It's true enough, but they are getting terribly spoiled, this new generation'.

'Well, we old ones must shown them better ways, by example', countered Martin.

'I agree', said the old woman. 'I have had seven on them myself, and only one daughter is left. Then she began to tell how and where she was living with her daughter and how many grandchildren she had. 'There now', she said, 'I have but little strength left, yet I work hard for the sake of my grandchildren; and nice children they are, too. No one comes out to meet me but the children. Little Annie, now, won't leave me for anyone. She's always saying: It's grandmother, dear grandmother, darling grandmother.' With these reminiscences, the old woman softened completely.

'Of course, it was only his youth, may God help him', she said, referring to the boy.

As she stooped to hoist the sack to her back, the lad sprang forward, saying: 'Let me carry it for you, Nanny. I'm going your way'.

The old woman nodded her head to Martin, and helped the boy get the sack on his back; and off the pair went, the old woman completely forgetting to ask Martin to pay her for the apple. Martin stood and watched them disappear down the street, eagerly chatting with one another.

Martin finally turned and started to look for his eyeglasses, which he had dropped when he first rushed out of his shop. Fortunately, there they were on the steps, unbroken. Entering the shop, he closed the door after him and sat down once more to his work-table. Picking up the awl he commenced his stitching, but darkness had gradually come upon him and he found his tired eyes could not see to pass the bristle thru the awl hole in the leather. As he looked up to the window, he noticed the lamplighter was going his rounds, lighting the street lamps.

Mumbling to himself: 'Guess it's time for me to light up to', he trimmed his wick on the lamp and lighted it, hanging it back on its hook where its glimmering rays fell across his work-table. Contented once more, he finished up the work on the boot and then carefully inspected its handiwork. It was perfect. Yawning, he swept up the cuttings, gathered his tools, put away the bristles and thread and the awls. Then he reached for the lamp and put it on the table so he might read a bit. Opening the Gospels at the place where he had stopped reading the day before, Martin found his mind turning back to his dream of the night before. No sooner had he done this, than he seemed to hear footsteps, as though someone was moving around behind him. He turned around, and he sensed someone standing in the dark corner of the room. He strained his eyes, but he couldn't make out who or what it might be. As he did so, a voice seemed to whisper in his ear: 'Martin, Martin, don't you know me'?

'Who is it'? stammered Martin.

'It is I,' said the voice. And out of the dark corner stepped Stepanich, who smiled, and then vanished like a cloud and was seen no more.

'It is I,' said the voice again. And out of the darkness stepped the woman and, holding her baby high in her arms, she smiled and the baby gurgled a happy laugh. Then, they, too, vanished from sight.

'It is I,' said the voice once more. And the old woman and the boy with the apple stepped in view; both smiled at him and then they, too, vanished.

Martin's heart and soul grew glad. He crossed himself, put on his eyeglasses and began to read from the Gospel, just where his eyes fell. He read:

'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in'.

His eyes misting, he looked at the bottom of the page and there he read:

'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me'.

Martin understood that his dream had truly come to pass; and that the Saviour had really come to visit him that day and had found welcome.



The Star of the Wisemen

Many have been the questions and many the answers as to what the 'Star of the Wisemen' was. No complete or satisfactory solution has ever been offered to the Christian World. Acceptance of it, as being a supernatural event - a miracle of God, as it were - is the common belief, even today.

Science, moving ahead in leaps and bounds, has opened new vistas for modern Man to find new understanding on many points of Tradition and Scripture, which, heretofore, were only blindly accepted by the masses of people. In view of this, two approaches can be taken by the open-minded individual to the meaning of the 'Star'. It is with these two avenues, that this presentation deals.

Scripture does not tell us either the day, date or year of Christ's birth. We can charge this failure up to either the early fathers of the Church, or to the Will of God. In either case, no way has ever been discovered to penetrate the haze of the past to reveal these hidden facts. Seculation has placed the actual birth somewhere between 7 BC and 2 AD - from spring-time to late autumn.

The 'Star' also has little factual background given it, in Scripture. Balaam prophecies: 'I will see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob...' (Num. 24:17); Amos said: '...ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the Star of your God, which ye made to yourselves' (Amos 5:26); St. Stephen said: 'Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven....ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the Star of your God Remphan....' (Acts 7:42-43); St. John envisions: 'and there fell a great Star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp....' (Rev. 8:10).

The 'Star' is recorded, of course, directly with the Nativity also - this everyone is familiar with: '....for we have seen his Star in the east....' and again: '...and, lo, the Star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.' (Matt. 2:2,9) - Somewhat later, Rev. 22:16, St. John's vision also records Jesus as being the bright and morning star.

Turning to the Magi, or Wise Men, we find that the Jews had always held these priests of Chaldea, Media, Persia, Babylonia and Assyria in great esteem. The Jews had known them well thruout their days of 'captivity' and even the 'Three Children' (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego), along with the Prophet Daniel (Belteshazzar) were instructed, by the learned, in the knowledge and tongue of these Chaldeans. King Nebuchadnezzar finding them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm. Of one thing we are certain, these 'Magi' were gifted with the ability to see visions and interpret them. Many, as already stated, were truly remarkable and even holy men, before God, as recorded in the Scriptures. Interpretations of visions, dreams and manifestations of God were a part of the life they led as priests. With this thought in mind, we can then reasonably and logically assume that the Magi might well have had a vision or manifestation appear, which, upon interpretation, revealed to them that a King of the Jews had been born.

Approaching the phenomena of the 'Star' from this standpoint causes a complete re-appraisal of the story we are accustomed to, concerning the Birth. We now realize that perhaps the story contains a far different meaning than merely one of Three Kings of the Orient following a bright heavenly object across miles of desert and countryside to Bethlehem. Accepting, for the time being, that such an interpretation of Scripture might be true, let us reconstruct a picture of what might actually have been the case.

Let us suppose that among the existing Magi of that day, there were three, whom God found to be worthy and even holy. Let us not be concerned with their names or identities, but only they as symbols of God's Will of making Himself known to Men. They are caused, by God, as have countless others, so shown in Scriptures, to see a 'revealing Light', a 'Star' if you will this occurring perhaps in visions, a dream or even in the light of their understanding. Again a visible manifestation, such as later came upon the Shepherds in the field, when the Angelic Host became apparent in Light and heavenly choir. With this in mind, we can well comprehend why no others ever saw the Star. We can understand why no writers of the day ever left a record of any heavenly manifestation, such as will be given later, from a scientific standpoint, in this same article. In other words, the Star might well have appeared only to them, and then only thru revelation.

Some doubting people will naturally expostulate: 'How could the Bible say a Star appeared, and we possibly believe that it might have been only a symbolic Star?' The Church Fathers have constantly reiterated that Scripture is in parable form; allegorical form. Christ, St. Paul, St. Stephen and countless others have themselves so said.

Examining the exact words of Scripture, relative to the Star of the Wisemen, know it was a tradition in those days that God be symbolized often as one of the Heavenly bodies: Sun, moon or star (reference to this has been given above from Scripture). Christ has also been tokened as a 'Star'. Other terms carried hidden symbolic meaning, as well. For instance, the east was regarded not only as the source of light (rising of the sun), but also as the source of the 'light' of understanding; naturally, the east, in this sense, is only symbolic. Now, if the Magi saw the 'star in the east', it could mean several things: namely- 1. they saw it in the physical compass direction of east; this could not have been the case, for if it were so, and they had followed it, they would have gone to India searching (it lies eastward, not Israel) - 2. they saw it in the heavens of their country, which they might have designated as being in the east. - 3. They saw it revealed to them from God, symbolically referred to as 'the east'.

In addition to this, Scripture continues: 'When they had heard the king (Herod), they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.' From this, one can deduce that the star had not been continuously with them from the start, but had merely showed itself to them in their own land and then reappeared after they had left Herod. The question arises: 'How could they know that a King of the Jews had been born when all they originally beheld was a star?' This revives the idea that their minds had been impressed by God to know what was taking place. Merely seeing a star in the sky would not do this. Therefore, the star must have been a vision which gave understanding. Some people, however, claim they determined it by astrology. This will be dealt with further along. The fact remains that they had a reappearing of the star, which caused them great joy and which led them to where the infant lay. Actually, one can't say it led them there; they had been informed by the King Herod that the child would be found in Bethlehem. What this passage does mean is that, after leaving Herod, the 'star' appeared to give them verification; the 'star' or 'light of God' then left them and, going before them, stood over the young child; it was this final 'manifestation' which gave them their great joy - the manifestation of being at the place where the child was. This gave them the final proof of God's Will and Presence.

(The second phase of this brief analysis will appear in the January issue - ED.)

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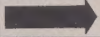
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